

Fascinating INSIGHTS

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The Right of Way

Why does the Torah use the seemingly redundant wording of צדק צדק תרדף?¹

R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischa explains this repetition that running to righteousness also has to be done with righteousness. Here are some of the many examples of this. To get up for an early Shacharis with an alarm clock,² one must be careful not to wake others. One who is rushing to Shacharis needs to be careful not to bump into others along the way. One putting on his Tallis should be careful not to hit anyone with the strings.

In this way we can comprehend that which it says regarding Avraham, ושמו דרך ה'—the way to get to the Mitzva was also pure.³ R' Moshe Bick once explained why the Yetzer Hara will motivate us to do something that is a secondary Mitzva since the ultimate goal of the Yetzer Hara is for a person to make the secondary the primary. He therefore starts a person with the primary and then the secondary (for example, a Chumra) hoping that eventually you'll make the secondary primary. For now, you think you are doing something extra but then you get confused and make the secondary the primary.

It is appropriate to work on these overlooked sensitivities during אלול, as is alluded to in אלול as it consists of the same letters as אל לו, to Hashem. That is to say, that which is a means to get to the end.

An Eternal Escort

¹ Devarim 16:20.

² Incidentally, it has been said that one can determine what a man is by his alarm clock. Does he view it as his best friend or worst enemy? Some look forward to waking up in the morning so that they can have a magnificent day of accomplishment whereas others painfully awake for another day and try to just make it through.

³ Breishis 18:19.

Since either money is taken from the person or he is taken from the money,⁴ one should let his money escort him eternally. To do this, one must give it away for Mitzvos such as charity. In this way we can explain אם כסף תלוה,⁵ when you lend money to the poor, as תלוה can mean to escort as in מלוה מלכה. So, if one wants his money to escort him eternally, he must give it to the poor—...העני עמך, as the Pasuk continues.

An article dated February 14, 2007 read that the owner of B & H—Herman Schreiber (a Satmar Chassid)—until 10 years ago lived in a small rented apartment on the third floor. The house he lives in now he bought from a bankrupted, formerly wealthy person who needed the money to get back on his feet. He couldn't find a buyer because the house was across the street from a wedding hall. In order to help this person out, Schreiber bought his house. When he moved into his new home, Schreiber didn't buy a single piece of new furniture rather he brought the furniture he had since he got married from his old apartment. He doesn't own a car nor have a chauffeur rather he travels with public transportation. He flies economy class, wears simple clothing and buys the simplest food. He believes being wealthy is a gift from Hashem and not something to show off with.⁶ Where does his money from his 700 million dollar business go? Charity. He says that is what money is made for.⁷

There was a wealthy person in Tel Shomron hospital that didn't have much longer to live. R' Elya Lopian therefore sent a boy from his Yeshiva in Kfar Chassidim to ask the wealthy person to donate money to the Yeshiva. Reluctantly, the boy went. But to his chagrin, he shrugged him off, being told to return in a week. The boy related back to his Rebbe what happened. A week later, R' Elya reminded the boy to go again. He went. But by the time the boy arrived at the hospital, the wealthy

⁴ Sichas Haran 51.

⁵ Shemos 22:24. The Gemara (Eruvin 65b) says that one's character can be perceived in three ways—בכוסו ובכיסו ובכעסו, with his cup of wine (if his mind remains settled when he drinks), wallet (if he deals honestly with people) and anger (he doesn't get angry too often). R' Chaim Kreisworth explained this differently: כוסו refers to when one drinks wine, does he drink when it's a Simcha and an event to celebrate or just to party with friends and the like. Also, the quantity of how much he drinks. כיסו—what does he give his money towards? To the poor, to shuls and the like or to build a nice house and buy fancy gadgets. כעסו—what upsets him? Some are saddened by Shabbos desecration, Lashon Hara and the like whereas others get upset because their honor was slighted or other petty things.

⁶ We are taught that Moshe said to the Jewish people ראו קרא ה' בשם...בצלאל, See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel... (Shemos 35:30). Where do we see that he was proclaimed by Hashem? R' Moshe Feinstein (Darash Moshe, Vayakhel, s.v. ראו) explains that when Hashem gives a certain strength to a person, he was given it in order to do the will of Hashem for the Jewish people and honor of Hashem. So everyone saw that Betzalel was declared by Hashem to construct the Mishkan because Hashem filled him with all that was necessary for it (See the Pesukim that follow 35:30). Similarly, whether a person is given wisdom, money and whatever else it is in order to do the will of Hashem. Do you share the talents and wisdom you have?

⁷ We must internalize that everyone dies and the wealth is just left for others. (See Tehillim 49:7-12).

man already died. The boy then told R' Elya Lopian what occurred, adding רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר relief and deliverance will come to us from some other place, meaning Hashem has many emissaries and if we are supposed to get the money we will get it some other way.⁸ R' Lopian replied "I didn't want his money because the yeshiva needs it. I did it for the person who is a secular Jew who has few זכותים, merits."⁹

In 1924, R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein¹⁰ (1866–1933) traveled to the United States to raise the funds needed to relocate his Yeshiva from Slabodka to Chevron. A wealthy Jew named Harry Schiff gave R' Epstein 20,000\$ for his cause enabling R' Epstein to transport his Yeshiva to Chevron. Six years later in 1929 R' Yechezkel Sarna¹¹ (1890–1969), the son-in-law of R' Epstein was in the United States and visited Harry Schiff. R' Sarna was in for a shock as he was unaware that Harry Schiff had lost all his money due to the Great Depression. R' Sarna sent a telegram to his father-in-law in Eretz Yisrael, telling him the state of Mr. Schiff. R' Epstein said that he will take a mortgage for the Yeshiva so that he can send back 20,000\$, the amount of money Harry Schiff gave. R' Sarna returned to Harry Schiff to tell him this great news. Harry began to cry saying, "I used to be one of the wealthiest people and now that money was taken from me. The only thing I have left is the 20,000\$ I gave to the Yeshiva and now you want to take that away from me also!" And in

the end, Harry didn't take the money offered by R' Epstein.

The Month of Refuge

The Arizal points out that the first letters of אנה עיר לידו ושמתי לך spell אלול. This allusion is found by an עיר מקלט, the city of refuge, since Elul is an עיר מקלט¹³ in the sense that it is an עת רצון¹⁴, an opportune time that Hashem accepts Teshuva¹⁵ on sins from the past.¹⁶

To be safe from the גואל הדם, avenger of blood, the perpetrator must go to a city of refuge. In life we have a גואל הדם, the Yetzer Hara (Satan). The city of refuge for us is Shema as it represents שמע שמים עול מלכות שמים. In fact, שמע is an acronym for עול מלכות שמים. There are 48 cities, divided into 42 and 6.¹⁸ Corresponding to this, we have 6 words in the first Pasuk of Shema and 42 in the first paragraph of Shema.¹⁹ This is telling us that when we accept the sovereignty of Hashem, we are saved from the Yetzer Hara.

The Gemara²⁰ tells us the Shofar is blown when we sit and again when we stand לערבב השטן כדי לערבב השטן in order to confuse the Satan. The Aruch²² explains this is because he will think it is the Shofar of Moshiach as it says יתקע בשופר גדול והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול, it shall be on that day that a great Shofar will be blown.²³ This will be the end of the Satan since he will be slaughtered then,²⁴ in accordance with וראת הצפוני ארחיק מעליכם, I will distance the Satan from you.²⁵ Indeed, the initials of the last six Pesukim we recite at Tekias Shofar form the phrase קרע שטן, tear up the Satan (קולי, ראש, ערב, שש, טוב, נדבות).²⁶

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the *Sefer, Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives on Unique Topics*. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

⁸ Esther 4:14. The sustenance one receives is not a gift of others' goodwill rather it is set aside from heaven (Yoma 38b, Rashi s.v. ומשלך). Indeed, one explanation in the redundancy of נתון נתון (Devarim 15:10) is that the money one gives the עני is already decreed from heaven. That is, that money you gave is essentially given. The question is who will have the merit to give it.

⁹ In כתבנו בספר זכיות we say אבינו מלכנו חן Yitzchak Hutner is bothered by this. If you have merits, it is already on file and if you don't have them, then what does it help to ask to be written in the book of merits? Because many things need to be accomplished in the world, Hashem sends opportunities. However, few are chosen for them. We are asking Hashem to send us those opportunities and give us the merit of doing them.

¹⁰ Perhaps one of the most influential and illustrious Torah families of that era was that of R' Sharaga Feivel Frank, a wealthy fur merchant in Kovno, and a devoted follower of Torah and Mussar. R' Frank, who died of pneumonia at the age of 43, left four daughters yet unmarried, and in his will, he asked that his wife, marry off each daughter to a young man who showed the signs of becoming a "Gadol B'yisrael"—a true leader of the Jewish people, a giant of Torah in its knowledge, thought, diligence, commitment, and values. Rebbetzin Frank took this mission very seriously and, in the end, R' Frank's Tefila was realized. His sons-in-law became the pillars of Torah Jewry through the next generation, and its guides after the Holocaust. These four leaders were R' Isser Zalman Meltzer of Slabodka and Kletzk, R' Boruch Horowitz of Slabodka, R' Sheftel Kramer of Slutzk and later New Haven, Connecticut, and R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein. In 1897, the Alter of Slabodka invited R' Epstein to become the Rosh Yeshiva in Slabodka, which he accepted. He began studying in the Volozhin yeshiva at the age of 16, under the guidance of R' Chaim Soloveitchik. R' Epstein left behind many students including the postwar builders of Torah in America: R' Aharon Kotler, R' Yaakov Kaminetsky, R' Yitzchak Hutner, and R' Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman. Among his sons-in-law were the heads of the Yeshiva of Chevron, R' Yechezkel Sarna and R' Moshe Chevronei as well as R' Moshe Finkel, the son of the Alter of Slabodka.

¹¹ His father was the city's Shochet and Melamed, and later its Maggid. His mother was the daughter of R' Shlomo Zalman Buxenbaum, a Chassid of the Chiddushei Harim of Gur, and author of *Rehovos Ir*, a commentary on Midrash Rabba. R' Yechezkel Sarna was a student of the Alter of Slabodka. In 1934, he assumed the position of Rosh Yeshiva.

¹² Shemos 21:13.

¹³ R' Yisrael Salanter said that that the single best advice to merit good judgment is to make sure that you are a person that people need and rely on. How can Hashem take away such a person if the community needs him? So we must ask ourselves how indispensable are we? How many people depend on us for encouragement and inspiration? How many Shabbos guests do we have? How many people do we advise and guide, teach Judaism to, help financially?

¹⁴ In Kelm they would count the days of Elul like treasures and they would be concerned on each day of Elul that passed (Ohr Yechezkal, volume 2, p. 171).

¹⁵ The Alter of Slobodka would say that Teshuva is not becoming better. It is becoming different.

¹⁶ This applies to everyone since there is no one who doesn't sin (Koheles 7:20. See Shabbos 55b and Tosafos there). So, אלול is an acronym for צהוד לעלה נאחד להטאת (Vayikra 12:8)—Elul applies to the sinner as well as to the one on a more elevated level.

¹⁷ Mishna Brura, 61:27. See Brachos 61b. This is just as we say in Birchas Krias Shema על מלכות שמים עליהם, and they all accept upon themselves the yoke of heavenly sovereignty. Also see the Tur (Hilchos Rosh Hashana, 591) that with the Pasuk of Shema Yisrael we can fulfill our obligation of Malchiyos on Rosh Hashana.

¹⁸ Bamidbar 35:6,7. See Makos 10a.

¹⁹ Ohaiv Yisrael, Masei, s.v. ואת הערים.

²⁰ Rosh Hashana 16.

²¹ See Mishna Brura 585:2.

²² Tosafos s.v. כדי.

²³ Yeshaya 27:13. This is like we say לתקע בשופר גדול להרותנו, sound the great Shofar for our freedom (Shemoneh Esrei).

²⁴ Succa 52a.

²⁵ Yoel 2:20. So, the Satan won't have time to prosecute.

²⁶ Beginning with שמעת קולי (Eicha 3:56).